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Ken Burns talks to *realscreen* about his upcoming Vietnam War project, and his work to date.

"Our television shows should look like and reflect what's going on culturally." 55



Planet Earth II earned raves from critics, audiences, and a particular member of the realscreen team.



#### on the cover

Bunim/Murray Productions' Born This Way for A&E follows a diverse group of young adults living with Down syndrome, and is garnering accolades and ratings.

VH1's America's Next Top Model is of several unscripted series highlighting diversity in casting.
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## THE VANGUARD OF REASON

fter a lengthy career in the hard news business, I have come to understand that one of the toughest questions you can ask someone is his or her age.

The pertinence (impertinence?) of the question harkens to old-school reporting days. It's a way to identify someone beyond a name – a concrete nugget in a world where truth can be ethereal.

It's a great question, and, after relentlessly asking it of people – young and old – for years, it's one I'll happily answer should we ever meet in person. (A career in print has also taught me that the numbers look less frightening when spoken than when typed).

I do, however, feel I owe you a brief introduction after joining *realscreen* in August of last year as managing editor.

Quick summary: Like many of you, I trade in facts. My work to date has been dedicated to determining what is real in any given situation, and to be suspicious of pretty much everything else.

Turns out it's a trait we have in common with Bjorn Ulvaeus, the Swedishborn songwriter and music producer who rose to global fame in the 1970s as one of the "B's" in ABBA, and, undeniably, a favorite from my own childhood. When he walked on stage recently as a guest at the World Congress of Science and Factual Producers in his hometown of Stockholm – a bearded, dapper version of his spandex-wearing younger self – I went a little crazy, standing front and center, iPhone at the ready to record every sound to emerge from his lips.

"Super Trooper." "Dancing Queen." "Fernando." How would he serenade us? But Bjorn wasn't there to sing. Instead, he delivered a short speech that began, fittingly, with a reflection on his own age and, frankly, that of much of the adoring crowd of TV and film creatives and executives at his feet.

"It's amazing to me that you people should be listening to these songs 35 years after the group split up," he said, as a canned version of "Does Your Mother Know?" played him to the microphone.

But he also had a very contemporary message for this particular group of fans, one that strayed far from the light-hearted lyrics of the pop songs that made him a star.

"We all know the world has gone crazy," he told us. "With fact-resistance. With fake news. With conspiracy theories. Old, odious, out-dated ideologies based on fear and superstition. Climate change is, of course, a hoax. It is the age of stupid and it is an assault on science and reason.

"It is fighting an uphill struggle and you are the vanguard."

The room fell noticeably silent for a moment as we pondered the weight, and the truth, of the statement.

Bjorn smiled. Tensions eased.

"Thank you," someone shouted, while others joined in an ad hoc chorus of "Thank You for the Music."

"I didn't come here to preach," he said, picking up on the theme. "I just wanted to say thank you to you and hope you have a fun evening, and I hope you will make a lot of those wonderful programs."

Fact is, I can't say it any better than that.

Cheers,
Darah Hansen
Managing Editor, *realscreen* 



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## FACTUAL CHECK

has certainly been one for the history books. From Brexit to the "surreal" U.S. presidential election, no one can say it's been uninteresting from a news perspective.

With discussions about fake news and the echo chamber effect dominating headlines, the denial of fact was a recurring theme at the World Congress of Science and Factual Producers in Stockholm in December. Now more than ever factual producers have a key societal role to play. There is an urgent need for compelling factual content to dispel the spread of non-truth that has confused voters, confounded the media and influenced decisions.

Scientific, fact-checked, smart programming from independent, trusted sources stands to win in this polarized environment. There's a sense that this is a great opportunity for factual producers to contribute much-needed balance on topics where misinforming the public can have dire consequences – such as the environment, trade agreements and immigration – and that it is a challenge they must embrace.

For the past few months the editorial team behind the Realscreen Summit, along with our esteemed advisory board, had to consider how this year's news events might change how stakeholders in the international unscripted and factual industries will approach their businesses. Along with socio-political influences, there are also economic pressures that have a tremendous influence on interactions between players at each transaction point. This important discussion will weave its way into many of the panels that have been carefully curated to ensure that delegates leave the Summit armed with the information needed to run their businesses as smartly as they can. "Under Pressure: The State of the Non-Fiction Nation" brings together stakeholders from various sectors of the industry, with an aim towards articulating and understanding the challenges as they exist now, and for the immediate future, as well as potential ways to find "win/win" scenarios for all concerned. Meanwhile, "America: Getting the Whole Picture" will examine the disparity that can arise when most of that country's programming is driven out of New York and Hollywood, leaving a vast swath of the country under-represented, both on-camera and behind the scenes.

I'd like to take this space to thank this year's Summit advisory board for their commitment in delivering to you topical, practical information. This year's board is helmed by co-chairs **Rich Ross**, Group President, Discovery Channel, Animal Planet and Science Channel; and **Tim Pastore**, President, Original Programming and Production, National Geographic. You can see the full board on page 57.

In closing, we bid adieu to Kevin Ritchie, a long-time contributor to *realscreen*, who is moving on to cover the vibrant Toronto entertainment scene on a full-time basis. He'll be greatly missed.

'til next time Claire Macdonald VP & Publisher realscreen

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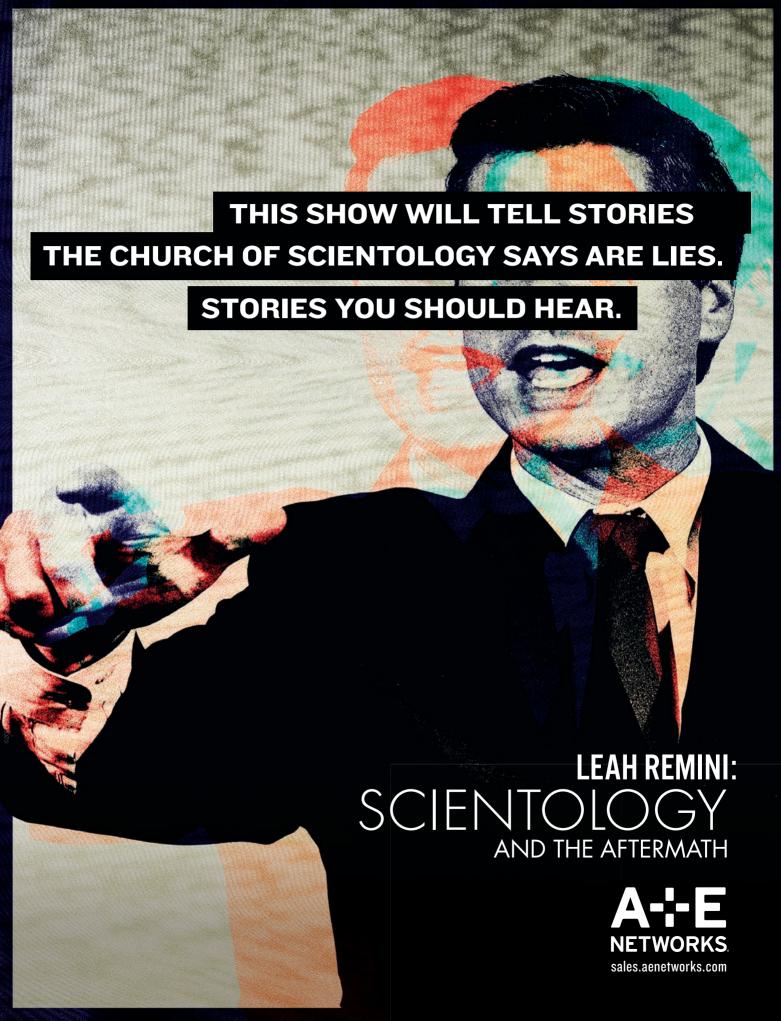
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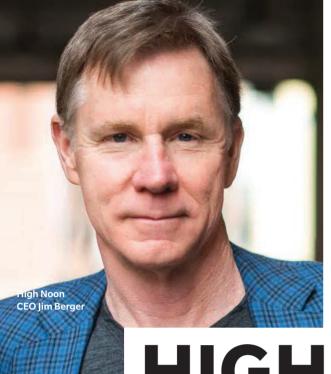












# HIGH NOON AT 20

BY SONYA FATAH

Denver-based High Noon Entertainment celebrates two decades in business in 2017. CEO Jim Berger talks to *realscreen* about its past and future. hat happens when a team of intrepid local TV journos with a nose for news collaborates on a business idea? They plant its seed and grow it into a competitive national business. That, at least, is the story of High Noon Entertainment, whose founders captured a window of opportunity in the TV biz 20 years ago and turned it into an unscripted content hit maker.

Over that period the prodco's CEO Jim Berger and co-founders Duke Hartman (COO) and Sonny Hutchison (CAO) have become veterans of the genre, producing more than 25 series and seeing over 5,500 episodes air over 30 networks.

Under the shade of the Rocky
Mountains, High Noon's Colorado base
– and the proximity to what Berger calls
"real American stories" – may, in fact, be
one reason for this prodco's successful
business story. In 2016 alone High Noon
produced 14 series, with 15 networkfunded pilots currently in development.

Its most successful show is Cake Boss - into its eighth season on TLC and hitting 200 episodes. Another hit is Fixer Upper on HGTV, in which charismatic husband-and-wife remodeling team Chip and Joanna Gaines redo homes with real estate potential into highdesign properties. It's one of HGTV's highest rated shows, seeing more than 25 million viewers in its third season, and winning a fourth season. Another current show, Mexicanocos, on Discovery Español is the highest-rated show on that channel. And other hits include Tough Love, a dating show-cumboot camp, which ran for six seasons on VH1; and Extreme Waterparks, currently on Travel Channel.

The diverse slate of programming at High Noon now falls under the ITV banner. In May 2013, the UK media group acquired a controlling interest (60%) in the prodco.

Berger says the company enjoys "tremendous autonomy" under ITV. Increased market consolidation drove Berger's decision to sell. "It became obvious to me that, in the world we are in today, it can help you be more

competitive if you are linked to and owned by a bigger company."

Specifically the deal gives High Noon access to international distribution deals. And while nothing has come to pass yet, international markets are part of the vision for the company, which hopes to pitch, and sell, more shows globally. "It's easier to sell a hit show in the U.S. if it is already doing well overseas," says Berger.

Beginning his career as a cameraman for Denver-based NBC-affiliate KUSA-TV, the station was also where he met Hartman and Hutchison, forming a lasting friendship and alliance.

Eight years after working at KUSA-TV, Berger was hired as president of Liberty Media-owned Intro Television, a division of TCI Media (now Comcast). There he evaluated 30 new networks like Animal Planet and Food Network to air some of their content on a single TCI channel. He brought Hartman and Hutchison into TCI and together they gleaned insights about the challenges and opportunities the then-new networks faced.

After TCI, High Noon came into being with two shows: *Unwrapped* for Food Network and *Emergency Vets* for Animal Planet. The former was a behind-thescenes look at guilty-food pleasures, while the latter took viewers into life at a Colorado-based vet hospital.

Today, High Noon employs 300 people, with a core staff of 35. While the company remains (by choice) headquartered in Denver, it has offices in Los Angeles (since 2004) and New York (2008).

High Noon's immediate future plans are still cable-focused, specifically on property, food, lifestyle and travel.

Alongside linear development, the prodco is also getting its feet wet in digital, though Berger estimates three-quarters of its business will center on traditional linear development five years from today.

"Journalism was terrific background for creating unscripted content," sums up Berger. "What we do today...is we're journalists and we're looking all around the country for super interesting people in extraordinary worlds."



# TRUE ENTERTAINMENT, ORIGINAL MEDIA MERGE

New York-based prodcos True Entertainment and Original Media – overseen by producers Glenda Hersh and Steven Weinstock – have merged to form Truly Original.

The arrangement puts production, postproduction, business and legal affairs, and finance under one roof. The two production shops are expected to amalgamate into one office space in New York City later this year.

The merger will also see resource sharing and will bring the staffs of both production companies together as one team. A spokesperson for the company said no layoffs are planned.

The company will maintain the True Entertainment and Original Media creative labels for brand consistency, and will continue producing distinct programming for each, including *The Real Housewives of Atlanta* and *Vanity Fair Confidential* from True Entertainment, and *Dual Survival, Ink Master* and *Swamp People* from Original Media.

Hersh and Weinstock will serve as copresidents and co-CEOs of the new company, and Truly Original will remain a subsidiary of Endemol Shine North America.

"We are genuinely thrilled to be announcing Truly Original, which represents a blending of the respective strengths of two successful production companies, while maintaining the creative identity of each," said Hersh and Weinstock in a joint statement.

Hersh and Weinstock launched True Entertainment in 2000, which was acquired by Endemol Shine North America in 2003. They later became co-CEOs and copresidents of Original Media in April of 2015.

**DANIELE ALCINII** 



#### **A Producer's Perspective**

ho said TV was a young person's game?
As we wave farewell to another eventful year in the global TV business, one of its brightest lights is a mere 90 years old.

Sir David Attenborough may be in the twilight of his distinguished career, but pulling in 12 million UK viewers on Sunday nights for six episodes of *Planet Earth II* is impressive. Despite seismic changes in our viewing habits, it's remarkable that the new *Planet Earth* is rating significantly better than the original landmark series first shown a decade ago.

There's a new spring in the step of BBC execs after a tough year in which they lost one of their other monster hits, *The Great British Bake Off*, to Channel 4.

The new *Planet Earth* is a fine piece of work, brilliantly deploying the latest technology. Although Sir David largely exists as just a voiceover, his DNA is in every single frame.

I had never imagined that a scene of baby iguanas fleeing from evil racer snakes would be one of my favorite viewing moments of the year. In terms of visceral drama, this was like a brilliant Paul Greengrass-directed chase from one of the Bourne films.

And I'm not alone in my enthusiasm. There's something about natural history clips that work perfectly in the YouTube world, as we discovered when our "Homewrecking Penguin" from our Nat Geo Wild show, Animal Fight Night, went viral globally. Planet Earth has produced a set of clips that have been seen by an amazing number of people.

There are a number of takeaways from the somewhat unexpected success of *Planet Earth II*.

Firstly, blue-chip natural history is alive and in good health, with banker appeal around the world. These are big, expensive shows and BBC Worldwide is a major investor. I'm sure they've got a best seller on their hands.

Once upon a time, prime natural history shows ended up on Discovery in the U.S., as part of the then-joint venture between the BBC and Discovery. Now they go to BBC America after a DVD/download window.

Also what's all this about young people deserting traditional viewing? *Planet Earth II* has lured two million of its audience from the much sought after 16-34 age group.

With so many big scripted series dominating the global TV market, it's gratifying to see something of such quality earning its keep.

There has also been plenty of talk about the death of linear television. Perhaps this is premature. BBC1 put together a monster Sunday night with the results show of *Strictly Come Dancing* and then Sir David working his magic. Maybe the feel-good combo of sparkly sequins and cute baby creatures is the perfect antidote to the grimness of the big, bad world outside.

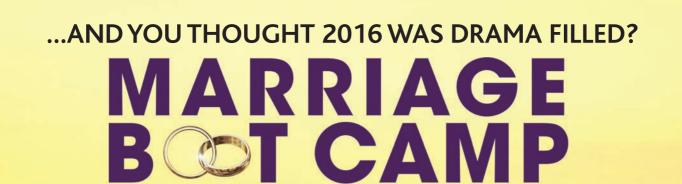
My sense of the year ahead is that as content producers we might all need something to cheer us up.

At December's World Congress of Science and Factual Producers in Stockholm there were many alarming reports from the front lines on just how tough the market is getting in both the U.S. and Europe. Productions were being delayed or canceled. Networks, wrestling with falling ad revenue, were cutting costs and budgets. Former hits were not working for today's audiences.

I remain excited about some of the big opportunities that are still out there, but I think it's particularly tough on small and emerging indies, outside the protective embrace of the big groups.

It rather reminds me of another Attenborough moment, with Emperor Penguins huddling together to brave the bleak Antarctic storms – a scenario eerily reminiscent of the producer huddle in the packed bars of the Realscreen Summit in chilly, post-inauguration Washington DC. Stay warm.

John Smithson is creative director of Arrow Media, an indie he co-founded in 2011. Previously he was chief executive at Darlow Smithson Productions.





## DOUG HERZOG EXITS VIACOM

Doug Herzog, president of Viacom Music and Entertainment Group and a longtime Viacom veteran, has left the firm just weeks after Bob Bakish was formally appointed CEO and tasked with charting a new direction for the company.

Herzog confirmed his January 12 departure in an internal memo to staff, noting, "Thus ends a 25 year professional journey, and wild ride spanning seven networks, four decades, three *Daily Show* hosts, over two separate tours of duty, and one joint venture.

"It was a helluva run, and I would wish it on anyone. I loved every minute of it," he said.

Herzog had been overseeing MTV, VH1, Logo TV, Comedy Central, Palladia, Spike, and Epix. Over his two-decade-plus career he is perhaps best known for developing MTV's The Real World and Comedy Central's The Daily Show.

He gave no immediate reason for the departure, but did note "the enormous change and disruption" dominating the media landscape and the world at large.

"I know it can be unsettling. But trust me, you should be excited and invigorated by it. Reinventing the brands and innovating with content are the great core strengths of this company. Bob (Bakish) is already bringing true leadership and vision to Viacom. He is a big believer in the power of these brands across all platforms. I promise you are in very good hands with him, as well as your tremendous brand leaders."

Herzog's move followed a number of staffing shake-ups at Viacom's millennial-skewing net MTV, including the October departure of Sean Atkins as president, and the subsequent appointment of Chris McCarthy to the post. Former EVP of original content Michael Klein also left MTV in November.

In December, MTV announced the consolidation of its unscripted team with sister network VH1, after appointing Nina Diaz as head of unscripted at both networks in late November.

#### **Jose Gonzalez**





#### **BEST PRACTICES:**

#### WHAT SUCCESSFUL PEOPLE NEVER WASTE THEIR TIME ON

BY CHRIS PALMER AND SHANNON LAWRENCE

uccessful people are able to accomplish an astounding number of tasks efficiently and effectively. What's their secret? They are masters of productive use of time. They maximize the time available for important things by not wasting precious minutes on unfruitful tasks, activities, and thinking. Here are eight things that successful people never waste their time doing.

Dwelling on mistakes Successful people transform failures into learning experiences. Their success is built on the ability to move past their mistakes, objectively assessing their shortcomings and applying this newfound knowledge constructively to future endeavors. By not moping or focusing on regret, they are able to redirect their energies to productive activities.

**Getting involved in office politics and conflicts** Becoming mired in petty activities such as unimportant workplace conflicts and office gossip wastes valuable time and energy.

Waiting for someone to tell them what to do with their time One of the best ways to increase your productivity and gain success in the workplace is to take initiative. Constantly waiting for others to give you tasks means you are utilizing neither your time nor your abilities to best advantage.

Getting trapped by technology For most of us, mindless web surfing and preoccupation with phones and other mobile devices takes up an excessive amount of time. Successful people resist these distractions, concentrating instead on producing good work.

#### **Persevering in unfruitful endeavors**

With every step in your career, you should be progressing. If your job is not providing opportunities to learn, you will fall behind in achieving your goals. Successful people do not stagnate in disappointing jobs. They either leave dull jobs, or look for more fulfilling tasks in their current work, or seek growth opportunities outside their job.

#### Staying in toxic relationships

Relationships with individuals who bring you down are detrimental to the pursuit of success. It may be hard, but sometimes it is best to end relationships if they are damaging your mental and emotional health. Successful people place a high priority on personal happiness, well-being and growth, and do not continue unhealthy relationships that jeopardize these goals.

**Doubting themselves** A large part of attaining success is having the right attitude. Nobody is perfect, but a positive, confident and open-minded outlook keeps you on the forward path. Doubt has no place in your plans for success; it wastes mental energy and drags you down.

Being sluggish or languid Of all the things that successful people never waste their time doing, perhaps the most important is doing nothing or being slothful. Success cannot be achieved without hard work. While it is important to relax and take time off, be careful not to let this slide into laziness.

Being successful depends on having the right attitude, a strong work ethic, and an effective, positive approach to use of time. If necessary, improve how you spend your time. Then watch how this increases your success.

Professor Chris Palmer is director of American University's Center for Environmental Filmmaking and author of three books, including the newly published Confessions of a Wildlife Filmmaker and Now What, Grad? Your Path to Success After College. Shannon Lawrence is a filmmaker and MFA candidate at American University.



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As America grapples with issues concerning law enforcement, A&E's latest gritty docuseries takes viewers to the front lines of policing in multiple cities, in real time.

olicing in America has been a hot-button issue as of late, in the wake of such events as the killings of unarmed black men in multiple American cities, and violence against police officers in Dallas, Texas and Baton Rouge, Louisiana.

Partially as a response, A&E hoped to address the perceived lack of transparency among the country's police forces last fall with Big Fish Entertainment's *Live PD*, a weekly live docuseries that captured the action of six police departments across America in real time.

In its first season, the series pulled 30 live feeds from six cities across the country in a bid to offer an unfiltered look into a typical Friday night for men and women in blue. Those feeds were then transmitted via 4G technology to a New York-based studio where ABC News chief legal analyst Dan

Abrams, alongside Dallas Police Department detectives Rich Emberlin and Kevin Jackson, provided audiences with insight into what they're viewing in real time, offering an inside take on each live incident.

The series premiered on Oct. 28 to 776,000 viewers in the U.S., with a 0.3 rating among 18-49 year olds, and was initially slated for an eight-episode run of 120 minutes each. It evolved into nine episodes, with some at three hours.

According to the network, ahead of the finale of part one of the first season, it had averaged 840,000 total viewers per week, regularly outperforming its time slot by 53% with total viewers, as of Dec. 15.

That gradual progression in viewership enticed A + E Networks' flagship channel to formally extend *Live PD* for an additional 10 episodes, prolonging the Friday night series into the spring. The extended first

"Live PD has that element of, 'What? How are they going to do that?' Now we've done it and I'm proud of it."



#### "It is resonating – it's something that people talk about. The situation that's going on right now in six disparate regions of the country is fascinating to watch."

season returned to A&E's airwaves on January 6 after a brief holiday hiatus.

"We think we're on to something," Elaine Frontain Bryant, exec VP and head of programming at A&E, tells *realscreen*. "What I've seen, week over week, is the show just gets better and we've seen the way the ratings have gone which are pretty steadily [up] – people are catching on to it. They're interested; it's social. It's been a trending topic many different weeks.

"What we've set out to do, we've accomplished – why wouldn't we keep at it?" she adds. "Certainly, I'm hopeful that there is a season two."

Social media, and Twitter in particular, has emerged as a unique focus group for the network. The digital news and social networking platform has allowed the show's creators to refine it on a minute-to-minute basis based on real-time feedback from an engaged audience.

"We now try to go to the studio only when it gives impactful discussions, more takeaway intel on what just happened in the field or in a package that we've pre-taped," Frontain Bryant explains. "We realized that less is more with the studio and it has to have a purpose."

"Each week we're digging in to all that data and trying to understand how the viewer is responding to it or what they're responding to and how we can dial certain things up and certain things down," adds Dan Cesareo, Big Fish Entertainment's president and executive producer.

"If you've been watching the show, you've really seen it evolve over the first eight episodes," he says. "In an ideal world, I would have done weeks more of run-throughs, but those are cost prohibitive and at some point you have to play the game and go live and really work on making those tweaks and adjustments."

It was in those early weeks of diving head first into live programming that the Big Fish team developed the instincts that dictated how long producers stayed on a particular story, when to leave it and when to return – all in real time. Week after week, the show's pacing and storytelling have matured as the crosscountry teams hit their stride, Frontain Bryant and Cesareo maintain.

"One of the interesting things about this series is the viewer has had to adjust how they watch television for this show, because they're used to these very neat, clean packets of content that always pay off," the Big Fish president says. "This is an extension of the live content that's being broadcast on the web, but it's a much higher-end experience with a much more polished version of storytelling."

Cohesion was an integral consideration for the teams involved with *Live PD*, particularly as the series embedded itself with new law enforcement offices in additional cities – an important move in highlighting a cross-section of policing in America. On Dec. 9, for instance, crews went live in Kentucky with the Warren County Sheriffs, covering the Bowling Green area of approximately 600 square miles.

Production teams, meanwhile, have lingered in each maiden city, implanted with the gang unit in Tulsa, Oklahoma; the Arizona Department of Public Safety, focusing on border patrol and narcotics; the Utah State Highway Patrol, battling a massive drug trafficking corridor; Bridgeport, Connecticut, one of America's most dangerous small cities; in Walton County, Florida; and in Richland County, South Carolina, home to the South's second largest sheriffs department that covers a broad range of areas and a diversity of crimes.



Left: Utah Highway Patrol sergeant Steve Salas asseses a drug bust; right: ABC News' Dan Abrams and **Dallas Police Department** detectives Kevin lackson and Rich Emberlin.

While the topic of transparency is particularly poignant in the U.S., societies worldwide experience myriad issues with law enforcement and civil disobedience, making Live PD adaptable

"This is an

extension of the

being broadcast

on the web, but

live content that's

it's a much higher-

end experience."

in just about every territory. But how would the subject matter translate internationally?

"Honestly, I don't know yet," admits Frontain Bryant. "I'm making a show that resonates right now for America in late 2016, and it is resonating - it's something that people talk about. The situation that's

going on in six different, disparate regions of the country is fascinating to watch. I couldn't tell you if England or Australia have the same issues.

"I'm not as intimately aware of all of the conversations, but I do know that

several different markets are interested in exploring the format," she adds. "There's a lot going on [in America] and each region has to figure out if it's the same situation for them."

> A home to various gritty docuseries, including the longrunning Intervention, The First 48, and the recent Leah Remini: Scientology and the Aftermath, A&E is looking to lead the genre into new territory.

"Live PD has that element of, 'What? How are they going to do that?' First it was the technology and then it became,

'How do you show that stuff?' Now we've done it and I'm constantly proud of it," Frontain Bryant says.

"It's respectfully done, in a way that we take seriously, with gravitas and respect for the individuals that are part of it." •





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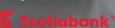
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# TRAILBLAZERS

uring a keynote



COURTENEY MONROE
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER
NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC
GLOBAL NETWORKS

presentation at last lanuary's Realscreen Summit in Washington D.C., National Geographic Global Networks CEO Courteney Monroe provided insight about where she wanted to take the channel in the vear ahead: a planned period of transformation with an aim to become a world-leading destination for premium content. The move saw the cable brand, under Monroe's quidance, establishing partnerships with A-list creative talent and embracing a "bigger, better, fewer" mantra as part of its focus on "creatively ambitious programming with scale, scope and entertainment value." Eleven months later, National Geographic Channel ushered in the global roll-out of the acclaimed documentary-scripted hybrid series

Mars from Ron Howard's Imagine Entertainment and Radical Media. The multi-platform event series premiered Nov. 14 to more than 30 million viewers worldwide, outperforming network averages in all but two markets, according to Nielsen. Ratings have come in at +126% or better in every region internationally, with Europe scoring +160%. In the U.S., the six-part series recorded the highest-rated premiere for P25-54 since the debut of *The Story of God* with Morgan Freeman on April 3, and now serves as the second most-viewed series premiere in network history to date.

Asked whether a second series of *Mars* is on the horizon, Monroe says, "We haven't decided yet, but we're actively discussing it given how pleased we are with the results of the first season."

# 2016

As one year closes and another begins, realscreen salutes those who made innovative inroads in the non-fiction and unscripted content arena. From bold business initiatives to cool creative endeavors, these individuals made moves worth watching in 2016.

Further aiding the broadcaster's multi-platform push in 2016 was the Leonardo DiCaprio-produced climate change documentary *Before the Flood*, which reached 60 million people globally, upwards of 7.2 million views on YouTube, and surpassed one billion minutes viewed across linear, digital, streaming and social platforms. The net took the big step of making the film available in commercial-free form across myriad digital and social platforms for seven days, coinciding with the broadcast premiere. The telecast, meanwhile, accumulated an audience of 844,000 total viewers for National Geographic Channel and Nat Geo Wild.

More major doc projects and global events are slated for the new year. They include an untitled Jane Goodall film in the works from acclaimed director Brett Morgen; Simon and Jonathan Chinn's South Central Los Angeles race riot doc, *LA 92*; the global event series *Earth Live!* from Bunim/Murray Productions and Berman Productions, set to broadcast live wildlife footage from all seven continents; and the Jason Silva-hosted *Origins*,

There's so much incredible content being produced. and there really is no way to break through without being exceptional.

Sylvia Strobel

**Shona Koester** & AFFILIATE PARTNERS

LEGAL & BUSINESS AFFAIRS Mike Reszler INNOVATION & DIGITAL STRATEGY which aims to tell how the modern world came to be, from Asylum Entertainment and creative director John Boswell, AKA melodysheep.

#### Have you arrived at your goal of becoming a world-leading destination for premium content?

I think we are in the early days of that goal. When I spoke about it a year ago, it was definitely still in formation, but this [fourth] guarter really marked the launch of our new strategy. It really rolled out in earnest this fall with our feature doc acquisition of Before the Flood with Leonardo DiCaprio directed by Fisher Stevens - and with the launch of our global event series Mars from Imagine Entertainment and Radical Media. I would say it's launched, but we're very much still in the early days.

#### Speaking of Mars, given that it was the first major hybrid scripted/unscripted series, do you plan on continuing to marry the genres?

It's about finding a new format, sticking with it, and being formulaic and prescriptive about it as much as it is about continually pushing boundaries, being innovative, being creatively ambitious and pioneering in everything that we do. We're really pleased with this interesting experiment in terms of storytelling with Mars, and I think you could expect that we're going to do more of it, but we're also going to try lots of new things as well.

#### You've also struck a chord with a characterdriven natural history series in Savage Kingdom. Can you talk what its success has meant for Nat Geo Wild?

We're trying to find a fresh take on natural history, and I think that's what Savage Kingdom represents. It's been a big success for us. It saw unbelievable DVR pickups, levels that Nat Geo Wild has never seen before and much more akin to behavior that networks see with scripted dramas, which is interesting.

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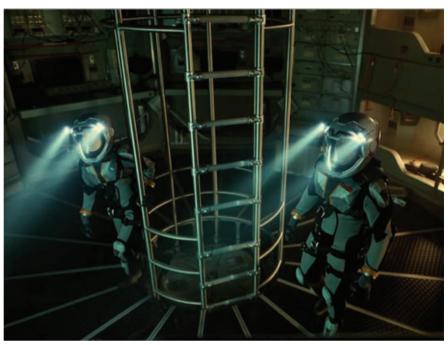
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But in the same way on Nat Geo Channel, the core channel, we're looking to pursue a level of creative excellence, a level of creative ambition, punch above our weight and take swings that are much bigger than we've done in the past. Savage Kingdom is certainly an example of that in the natural history space.

#### What do you see as the prime challenges facing the industry in the year ahead?

The challenges in the year ahead are no different than the challenges in the past year, really. There's so much incredible content being produced, and there really is no way to break through without being exceptional. There's no reason to watch anything that is just mediocre. That challenge, which is very much alive and well in the coming year and years, is exactly why we're pursuing the strategy we are, which is premium, high quality, distinctive content, aimed at big audiences and produced with the best A-list talent from around the world. As long as we point our compass toward the north star of quality I really think we'll win. DANIELE ALCINII



Nat Geo's six-part series Mars combined a narrative story line with documentary content.

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**EZRA EDELMAN**FILMMAKER
O.J.: MADE IN AMERICA

nearly eight-hour film about the life of O.J. Simpson is shaping up as a serious contender in this vear's Oscar race for best documentary feature. Directed by Ezra Edelman, O.J.: Made In America had its world premiere at the 2016 Sundance Film Festival, opened in theaters in May and aired on ABC and ESPN in June as part of the latter's '30 for 30' doc strand. It has since won rave reviews and racked up honors from the IDA Doc Awards, the National Board of Review, the Gotham Awards and the Critics Choice Doc Awards. It has also made the Academy Awards' doc feature shortlist. That Made In America would get a

an award season darling, was far from Edelman's mind when he was hunkered down in an editing bay piecing together the life story of the football hero-turned-celebrity pitchman-turned murder suspect.

theatrical run, much less become

"It's been a weird six months," he tells realscreen. "You go from spending the previous year locked in a room and just doing your work – a very lonely existence – and the next thing you know you're meeting more people than you've ever had to meet in your life."

Although the doc was commissioned by ESPN, its theatrical release in New York and Los Angeles made it eligible for Oscar consideration. Some may consider it an episodic series, but Edelman conceived it as one continuous film and later worked with ESPN Films execs Connor Schell and Libby Geist to make it work as a five-part TV series.

Made In America treats Simpson's life as a springboard into America's race and class politics, and casts a Los Angeles jury's decision to find him not guilty in the murders of his ex-wife Nicole Brown and her friend Ron Goldman within a broader cultural dynamic of the mid-1990s.

With streaming services and cable nets backing doc series with theatrical-style production values (and budgets), feature documentarians are increasingly looking toward episodic series to tell stories. And O.J.: Made In America suggests future projects that toe the line between TV and film can have legs on the big and small screens.

Although Edelman did not set out to expand the reach of long-form doc-making or bridge the creative divides between TV and cinema, O.J.: Made In America has done exactly that.

#### Are a lot of people coming to you with other seven-hour doc projects?

I don't know if I'd use the word "transformational," but I have a lot more calls about doing things than I had before and certainly beyond what

I could possibly field. Across the board, there have been some people who have pitched me doing things that have been a little bit right on the nose. But you need to have the subject matter drive the form more than you can say, "That's great, what you did; let's do this bigger treatment of this person and add some context."

It's one thing
if people were
turning on PBS
to watch this
doc, but people
probably don't
go to ESPN to
watch this fare.

# What do you think of the Oscar talk and the film's success on the awards circuit?

The idea of starting off being like, "I'm going to do this thing that's going to work this way on TV and we're going to release it theatrically" is just not the way it worked. I made a really long movie. I understood I was making a movie funded by a commercial television entity, but I also knew that the last thing I'm ever going to do is watch that movie with commercials. Still haven't.



What does your *story* sound like?

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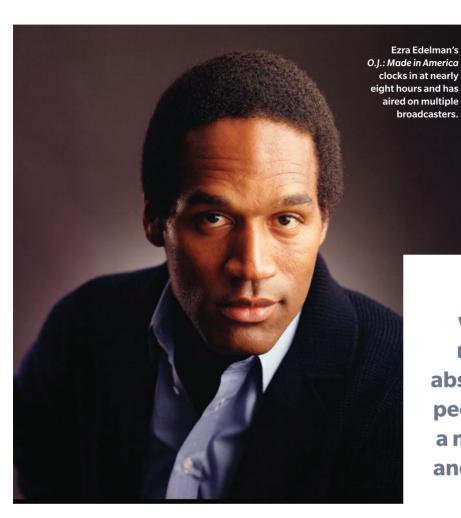
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The form I wanted the movie to be absorbed as was people sitting in a movie theater and watching it. Now, I do understand a lot of people don't have eight-and-a-half hours to do that. I was happy also if there were all these different ways to watch it. This was all new to me – that people could see it in the theater, stream it online, watch it on television. It certainly speaks to a "new world order," but from my standpoint, in terms of the execution and the intention of it, it was no different than my intention of doing anything else. We just live in a world now where you can access things in many different ways.

#### What allowed this project to become the ambitious film that it became?

From that initial conversation, it was a five-hour film and I said I didn't want to make five one-hours. They said, "We understand very clearly." Whether they were lying to me or not, they said, "Let's just do this bigger thing." There might've been conversations here or there – what's going to happen when someone is going to see it – but those were few and far between. As the thing got longer, from a network standpoint, they were creatively supportive without being creatively intrusive. They let the film exist on its own merits in terms of what it needed to be. That's a unique relationship.

#### What responses from viewers have resonated?

A lot of people have said, "I watched the trial and I didn't even understand what it was all about." If we somehow clarified it for them, great, but I find it a little strange if you did, in fact, watch the trial. I more or less understood the conversation about it and I didn't watch the trial.

To me, things that seemed obvious clearly weren't [to everybody]. It's not that I believe we live in a world where everybody knows their history, because I certainly don't, and I know

what I forget or need to revisit. So I believe very passionately in

So I believe

The form I
wanted the
movie to be
absorbed as was
people sitting in
a movie theater
and watching it.

able to convey that history where you can do it in a digestible form and respond to it. That, to me, is the greatest victory. The one thing I'll sav about the ESPN-specific platform is that it feels slightly subversive to make a film that speaks to these topics but do it on a network that

the idea of being

reaches so many people that don't engage with issues necessarily in that way. It's one thing if people were turning on PBS to watch this doc, but people probably don't go to ESPN to watch this fare. I feel good that we were able to reach audiences who normally wouldn't absorb content of this type. That's been a nice thing. **KEVIN RITCHIE** 



JAY HUNT
CHIEF CREATIVE OFFICER
CHANNEL 4

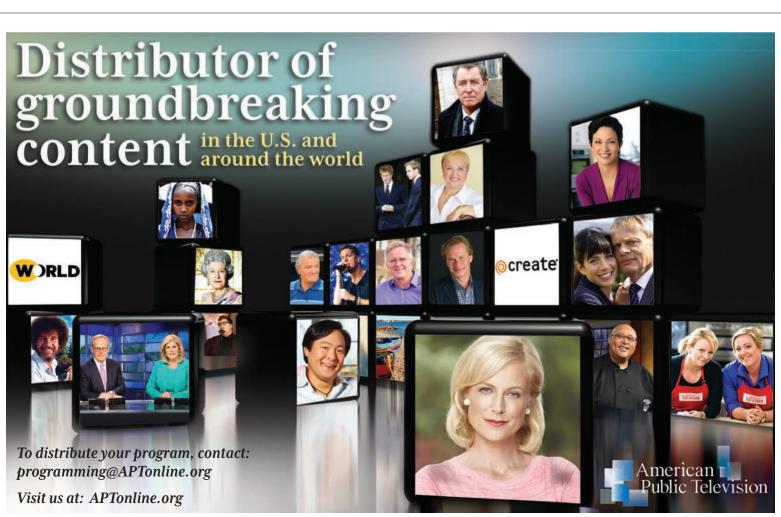
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Channel 4 front and center in one of 2016's biggest surprises when it acquired Love Productions' The Great British Bake Off following its huge run on the BBC. Despite more than a year of tense negotiations between the Beeb and the London-based production company, talks fell apart by mid-September, opening the door for C4's programs boss Jay Hunt to ink a three-year contract worth £75 million (US\$93 million) for the culinary competition, which was bred and nurtured by the British pubcaster for seven seasons. The purchase came with a pledge from

Hunt to provide the program with "a safe home," albeit one that will now allow for Love to monetize the cooking competition format through related products, events and spin-offs – something that the BBC's rules and regulations prevented the series creators from pursuing.

Hunt has also assured long-standing fans that *Bake Off* will be left "just as it is," though Paul Hollywood will be the only one of four long-time presenters to move with the format to its new home.

Spiriting away one of the largest British unscripted formats from its fiercest competitor is only the latest accolade for C4 under Hunt's leadership. Channel 4 saw its audience share surge in 2015 for the first time in nine years; has twice been named the Edinburgh TV Festival Channel of the Year (2014 and 2016); and was awarded coverage of the Sochi 2014 and Rio 2016 Paralympic Games following a highly competitive tender process, beating out the BBC with an approximate £7 million bid. Further, Hunt has directed the channel to an



unprecedented collection of industry awards, including more BAFTA TV awards than any other channel (2014 and 2015), and more Royal Television Society Program Awards than any other channel (2014 and 2016).

The Great British Bake Off is joining Channel 4's line up from the BBC. What does the acquisition of such a beloved show mean to C4 and to you, personally?

Bake Off is a global hit and it's a huge thrill to have it coming to 4. Personally, it was wonderful to have a producer I have worked with for years bring the biggest show on TV to a network I run because he believed in my creative vision and way of working.

You've previously pledged to keep *Bake Off* "just as it is," but outside of Paul Hollywood, the majority of its hosts declined to move with the program.

What can viewers expect from C4's version?

Bake Off has a large, loyal audience and is an exceptionally well-produced show. I want those viewers to feel excited about watching it on 4 but to recognize it as the program they love. We are spending a lot of time on the casting and I can't talk about that yet, but I am really encouraged that we are seeing hundreds of bakers getting in touch wanting to be on the show in 2017.

You're gearing up for the latest edition of Levison Wood's ratings hit *Walking* franchise. Given the successes of his previous two series, what does *Walking the Americas* mean to Channel 4?

Walking the Americas is a continuation of a very successful franchise with Levison. It's on air in January and I hope audiences will enjoy his raw, unmediated take on a part of the world they feel they know well.

66

I have a fantastic team of commissioners working with the very best producers in the business and that has helped transform the channel.

"



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**Under your leadership, Channel 4 has** twice been named Channel of the Year in three years, and this past year received more Royal Television Society Program Awards than any other network. What exactly are you doing right?

I have a fantastic team of commissioners working with the very best producers in the business and that's helped transform the channel. Overall, we've taken some big punts on shows and persisted with them until they've grown into hits. We've also changed the way we work to encourage people with different skills and backgrounds to work together and that's led to a whole new raft of hybrid shows.

In 2017, we have a strong spine of returning shows in the schedule but the ambition is still there with big plays like the recreation of Captain Bligh's epic journey across the Pacific after Mutiny on the Bounty and innovations in form like our factual drama event, The Trial.



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# What do you see as the prime challenges facing the unscripted programming industry in the year ahead – particularly after a year when everyone seemed to be talking about scripted?

I don't think it's an exaggeration to say we are now the market leaders in the UK in factual entertainment. The prize is to keep that crown. We want to keep making shows that have strong public service values but deliver large young audiences. That's the real sweet spot.

#### What are you most proud of in 2016?

I think in it has to be our coverage of the Rio Paralympics. It was not just groundbreaking and commercially successful but, even more than that, it changed attitudes to disability and that was a huge source of pride to everyone at 4. **DA** 

Levison Wood (pictured) returns to C4 in 2017 with another exploration series Walking the Americas.





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TABITHA JACKSON
DIRECTOR, DOCUMENTARY
FILM PROGRAM
SUNDANCE INSTITUTE

year into her job as the director of Sundance Institute's documentary film program, Tabitha Jackson stirred up conversation in the doc world with a keynote talk at the DOC NYC festival.

The former Channel 4 arts commissioner spoke about the importance of valuing cinematic expression in an area often dominated by social issues and filmmaking as activism.

A year after that talk, Sundance

Institute has ushered in the Art of Non-Fiction fellowship, an artistbased – rather than project-based – initiative to support filmmakers interested

in inventive artistic practices. The program is at the forefront of wider industry attempts to make artful documentaries a financially sustainable career path.

Now in its second year, the fellowship has spun off into a film fund for more seasoned

directors with experimental work in very early stages of development, and Sundance has expanded its creative producing lab to include documentary filmmakers.

Sundance Institute is also introducing a creative writing fellowship to support critical and in-depth reporting on documentary filmmaking, and Jackson hopes to beef up the focus on cinematic language in doc workshops and labs.

Although Jackson has long been a proponent of creative documentaries, she insists these initiatives are part of a pendulum swing in the culture and she is seizing the moment to say that holistically supporting artists is a viable way forward.

"There's something in the air," she explains,
"in the same way that when I came into the job
three years ago, in the air was this very vibrant
and audible conversation around the power of
non-fiction filmmaking to affect social issues. Now
there is an increasing conversation around the
form and the artist."

66

Some of this work is impossible to pitch without making ridiculous claims about what the outcome is going to be. The point is the creative process will determine what the work is.

"

#### How have you built upon the Art of Non-Fiction program over the past year?

We started off with a fellowship because we wanted to model artist support rather than project support. We also realized we do want to support the work getting out so we now have a specific fund, the Art of Non-Fiction Fund. For a long time internally we were referring to it as the 'S\*\*\* You Can't Pitch Fund.' Some of this work is impossible to pitch without making all kinds of ridiculous claims as to what the outcome is going to be. The point is the creative process will determine what the work is.

By getting in early on work created by people with a proven track record, we can support that crucial development/pre-production period without putting unnecessary demands on them. We trust them to undertake the process and if they fail, they fail but we really value the endeavor.

#### You are also launching a climate change lab in 2017. Why focus on a specific subject area?

This is an unusual time and it also makes sense for the values of our founder. [Robert] Redford





has been invested in the environmental movement from day one. The Robert Rauschenberg Foundation, Discovery, The Kendeda Fund and others said we want to give filmmakers money to reflect what is going on and, to be honest, initially we pushed back.

We weren't seeing the work that would justify it and I wasn't sure we could deliver on producing all these films about the environment. We said we want to explore the barriers to making creative films about the environment that would cut through. It just so happens there are some big films coming out, which is being reflected in this year's festival. We're still asking how we get beyond the people who already agree and stimulate the modern imagination of a group who perhaps [filmmakers] haven't been speaking to successfully. So watch that space.



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# How have you seen filmmakers responding to the election of Donald Trump as U.S. president?

It's still early. The conversation is incredibly vibrant about reasserting the values that are important to us, about the independent voice and diversity of perspective and intolerance of hate speech. In terms of what work is being made, it's too early to tell. It's going to be an interesting tonal moment for us to be on the mountain. The second day of the festival is the inauguration. The questions are: how do we not only speak truth to power, but how do we speak truth generally, and how do we speak to each other when we disagree. [They will] be interestingly expressed during the festival.

## Have filmmakers done a good job of reflecting the discontent that may have resulted in his election?

The work that we see and the work that's being made, in my opinion, shows an incredible breadth of experience internationally. We need to look at what the work is and how it's made, but also, crucially, who gets to see it and what are the mechanisms of distribution that allow this work to enter communities and not just reflect their experiences, but be made by them as well.

The distribution landscape is still slightly "wild west" so it's up to us to make sure that it reflects the needs of this work, which is to be made and disseminated by the broadest and most diverse perspectives as we can [provide]. That's why it's so vital that the independent, non-profit film world is not subject to the demands of the market, but is coming from a genuine place of free expression – whatever political viewpoint that comes from. Those expressions make for a healthy democratic society. **KR** 



It's so vital that the independent, non-profit film world is not subject to the demands of the market, but is coming from a genuine place of free expression.

"



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# YEAR IN REVIEW

Interesting times, indeed. From the election of a reality star to the highest office in American government to headline-grabbing lawsuits within the unscripted content community, 2016 proved to be one rollercoaster ride of a year. Here's a summation of some of the year's top stories.

### DONALD TRUMP: FROM THE APPRENTICE TO PRESIDENT



As Donald Trump steamrolled through the Republican primaries to become the party's presidential candidate and then, in an upset victory over Democrat Hillary Clinton, the President of the United States, plenty of

pundits cast a side-eye at the reality TV industry.

The tycoon-turned-TV star spent 14 seasons as the star of NBC's business competition series *The Apprentice*, and many argued that his ability to draw headlines with punchy slogans and sound bites gave him an edge in the election.

His controversial campaign even ensnared *The Apprentice* executive producer Mark Burnett, after a 2005 tape of Trump making lewd remarks while off camera during a taping of *Access Hollywood* hit the press. Social media was soon alight with calls for Burnett to release allegedly damaging outtake footage from *The Apprentice*. Burnett was a key figure in Trump's TV success, but silent during the campaign. After the misogyny allegations surfaced, he issued a statement distancing himself from the campaign.

"I am not now and have never been a supporter of Donald Trump's candidacy. I am NOT 'Pro-Trump,'" he said.

Meanwhile, other surprising political developments signalled change for the international film and television business. The UK TV industry was left grappling with the British public's shock decision to exit the European Union in a June 23 referendum. The Brexit vote left a cloud of uncertainty over the industry, with ITV announcing plans to slash £25 million (US\$32.79 million) in overhead partially in response to the situation. The British Film Institute has also unveiled a five-year plan that will focus on increasing in-house expertise to better position the industry during the country's Brexit negotiations. **KR** 

#### **LEGAL BATTLES BREWING**



Intellectual property rights have always been a hot topic among American producers in a market where networks generally take all rights. Now, a messy legal dispute has thrust the financial dealings of the unscripted industry into the public eye.

Discovery Communications is in the midst of a legal showdown with one of its former top suppliers, LMNO Productions. The two companies have worked together since 1999, but in June Discovery stopped production on the shows the producer was making for its cable channels after reviewing production agreements and allegedly discovering "procedures and practices inconsistent with Discovery's contractual rights," according to the firm.

In response, LMNO filed a US\$7 million lawsuit accusing Discovery of copyright infringement, unfair competition, common law trademark infringement and breach of written contract. It further alleged it had become the victim of an accountant that had doctored the company's books to embezzle thousands in personal transfers and that Discovery was exploiting the situation to take over LMNO-produced programs such as *The* 

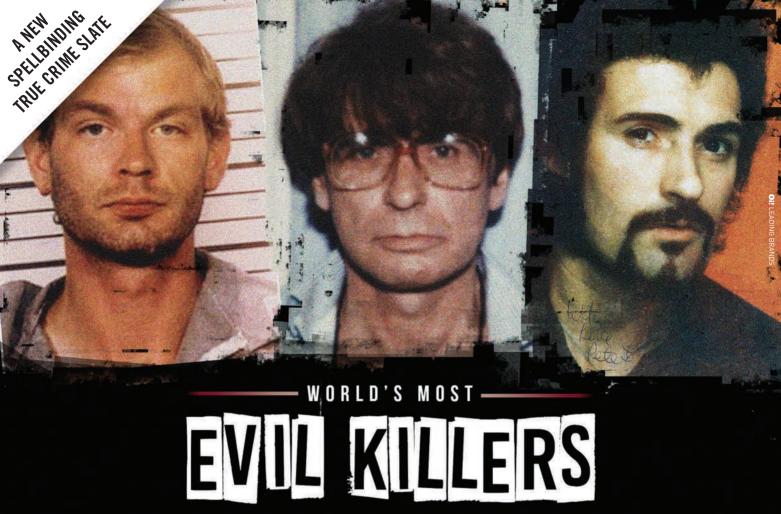
Little Couple and 7 Little Johnstons.

Discovery countersued, accusing LMNO of keeping two separate sets of books as part of a scheme to overcharge and defraud the cable giant. On June 30, FBI agents raided LMNO's office in Encino to execute a sealed search warrant as part of a criminal investigation.

By the end of the summer, the legal wrangling was focused on the TLC reality series 7 Little Johnstons (pictured) when Discovery filed a writ of possession, asking a U.S. magistrate judge to force LMNO to hand over footage of the second season. Discovery accused LMNO of holding the footage "hostage," but the producer countered that the network had not fully paid for the footage. In early December, a U.S. magistrate judge issued a recommendation that the district judge overseeing the case order the writ of possession in favor of the network, having denied that motion months earlier.

Meanwhile, late in the year, the founders of another American unscripted prodco found themselves embroiled in a lawsuit. Scott and Deirdre Gurney, co-founders of *Duck Dynasty* producer Gurney Productions, were fired from the company and slapped with a lawsuit from parent firm ITV, on the grounds of "self-dealing, fraudulent concealment and breach of contract," according to a statement from ITV. The Gurneys' legal team subsequently denied the allegations and said the duo was "considering all of their legal options."

**KR (with files from Barry Walsh)** 



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### BIG SHIFTS FOR TOP UK FACTUAL SERIES



For the first time in 22 series, the BBC premiered *Top Gear*, the world's most watched factual program, without controversial presenter Jeremy Clarkson, following a much-publicized sacking the year prior.

Instead, BBC Radio host Chris Evans (pictured) and *Friends* star Matt LeBlanc – as well as five other presenters – took the wheel with a fresh set of tires and high hopes.

Season 23's debut episode, however, would secure the series' lowest ratings in a decade, reaching a peak of 4.7 million viewers, and an average of 4.4 million.

Evans exited the show in July shortly after the season finale and 13 months after joining the BBC's flagship production. An average of just 1.9 million people tuned in to the Season 23 finale, marking the first time the series fell below the two million target since the program's initial revamp in 2002.

Despite that, the corporation forged ahead with LeBlanc, inking

him to a two-season deal for the new-look *Top Gear*, with Season 24 on the horizon for BBC2 and globally in 2017.

Adding further insult to injury were the loss of *The Voice UK* and *The Great British Bake*Off, respectively, from the pubcaster's airwaves.

The Talpa singing competition format found its new stage with commercial broadcaster and Talpa Media parent company ITV, while Love Productions' *Bake Off* entered Channel 4's kitchen. Both secured three-year deals with their respective broadcaster.

The BBC had refused to enter into a bidding war or pay larger prices to keep either show.

Moving the two programs to ITV and Channel 4 – both of whom face fewer, if any, commercial activity pressures from the UK government – opens new moneymaking ventures previously closed to the content creators. DA

### DOCS EXAMINE RACE RELATIONS, THEN AND NOW



Last year, awards season conversations were dominated by the hashtag #OscarsSoWhite, leading the Academy of Motion Pictures Arts & Sciences to diversify its ranks. The 88-year-old organization invited 683 artists to join, including 48 doc-makers, with a particular focus on women and people of color.

Whether that action will impact this year's nominees remains to be seen, but in the documentary feature category at least three films centering on race relations are among the front runners for a nomination: Raoul Peck's essay film on James Baldwin, I Am Not Your Negro (pictured); Ezra Edelman and ESPN Films' seven-hour-plus O.J.: Made In America and Ava DuVernay's Netflix doc, 13th.

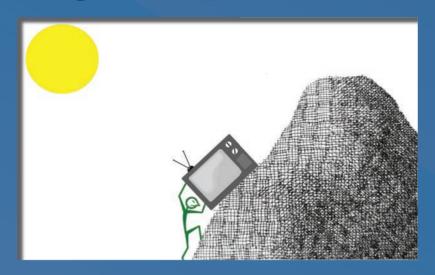
Peck's film revisits author and intellectual Baldwin's writings on the civil rights movement to explore the kind of activist leadership needed in the present, while DuVernay gives viewers a

history lesson on racism and the prison industrial complex to show how the Thirteenth Amendment led to mass incarceration in the United States. Meanwhile, O.J.: Made In America puts the O.J. Simpson murder trial of the mid-1990s, and the polarizing not guilty verdict that resulted, into a wider context of civil unrest and historical injustice.

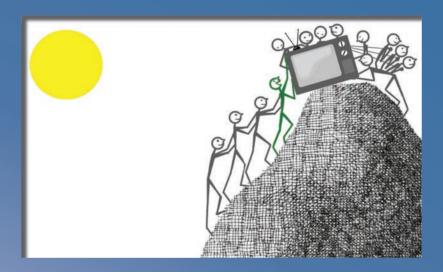
All of these docs challenge viewers to question accepted narratives and place the Black Lives Matter movement and current social justice activism into context.

"We have to start from the bottom up, not from the top down," Life, Animated helmer and Academy board of governors member Roger Ross Williams told realscreen in 2016. "We have to raise the next generation that will become the gatekeepers, the agents, the directors and the producers because we can't sit around and wait around for Hollywood to change." **KR** 

# Fighting An Uphill Battle?



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Broadcasters around the world took even further steps this year to retain potentially lucrative global intellectual property rights for their unscripted content by establishing in-house production shops.

In June, NBC Entertainment restructured its unscripted division by tapping Meredith Ahr (pictured)

to lead the Universal Television Alternative Studio, which produces content for both NBC and other broadcast and cable nets. The unit reports to Paul Telegdy, who was also elevated in June to president of the company's alternative and reality group. One month later, the studio unveiled its first program, World of Dance, a 10-part dance competition series coproduced with Jennifer Lopez's Nuyorican Productions.

CBS Television Studios moved to assert further influence over its factual slate with the launch of an unscripted division headed up by reality producer Ghen Maynard. The move marked a return to the American network for Maynard, for whom he previously produced *The* 

Amazing Race, Survivor, America's Next Top Model and Big Brother. The net's factual studio, whose roster currently includes the Apple Music series Carpool Karaoke from Fulwell 73, will look to produce content for broadcast and cable networks, streaming services and digital platforms.

After an initial investment in U.S. virtual reality content studio Jaunt three years earlier, UK pay-TV broadcaster Sky in March launched its own internal virtual reality imprint – Sky VR Studio – that will look to release more than 20 films spanning sports, movies, news and entertainment for the coming year.

The BBC, meanwhile, lost its longstanding production guarantee that ensured half of its content was commissioned in-house under an

overhauled Royal Charter in May which opened the pubcaster up to the private sector.

As it stood, 50% of the corporation's programming was produced in-house, with 25% going to indies and a further 25% opened to competitive bidding. Under the revised charter agreement, however, BBC spun its existing in-house production division into a commercial subsidiary, BBC Studios, set to produce programming for the Beeb as well as for other networks in the UK and abroad.

But the move to become a separate unit has come at a cost, with the October announcement that 300 jobs would be axed from BBC Studios. **DA (with files from BW)** 





#### **NETFLIX, AMAZON MAKE MAJOR MOVES INTO UNSCRIPTED**



The veils of secrecy surrounding the unscripted agendas for SVOD titans Netflix and Amazon slipped off in 2016, with the latter company putting big bucks behind Jeremy Clarkson's post-*Top Gear* series, *The Grand Tour* (pictured). While an exact dollar figure hasn't emerged, a price tag of US\$250 million for

three seasons of the auto series – also starring Clarkson's *Top Gear* comrades Richard Hammond and James May – has made the rounds. Upon the series' debut via Amazon Prime in select territories in November, the company said the first episode broke its previous streaming records with viewership

"in the millions."

Netflix, meanwhile, steamed through 2016 with its crime docuseries, Making a Murderer, being the year's most talkedabout non-fiction program. Launching in December of 2015, the series - helmed by Laura Ricciardi and Moira Demos and 10 years in the making – had a good chunk of the world buzzing about the story of Steven Avery, a Wisconsin man exonerated by DNA evidence in a case of sexual assault and attempted murder but subsequently convicted in another murder case several years later. Like HBO's The Jinx: The Life and Deaths of Robert Durst in 2015, Making a Murderer kept the crime docuseries genre hot, with broadcast and

cable nets scrambling to add more whodunit fare to their skeds. A second season is, perhaps unsurprisingly, on the way.

Netflix also announced a move into the unscripted formats game with news of The Ultimate Beastmaster, from Sylvester Stallone and Dave Broome. The competition series will air localized versions in six markets - the U.S., Brazil, South Korea, Mexico, Germany and Japan. But that probably won't be all for unscripted from the SVOD giant. Chief content officer Ted Sarandos confirmed during a keynote interview at the UBS 44th Annual Global Media & Communications Conference that Netflix has close to 20 non-fiction series on the slate for the year ahead. BW





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# HOW WAS IT FOR YOU?

(Helpful hint for 2017: strike the word "authentic" from your vocabulary.)

Every year, we offer our readers the opportunity to sound off on the year that was... the good, the not so good, and the just plain weird. Here's what you had to say about 2016.

The best factual content I've seen online this year was:

Comedians In Cars Getting Coffee (Crackle) – the one with President Obama.

The most positive development in the non-fiction content industry this past year was:

The enormous growth of factual content on digital platforms such as Netflix, Amazon, Hulu, etc.

The most troubling development in the non-fiction content industry this past year was:

Alleged corruption and fraud in two big U.S. production companies.

The idea I wish I thought of was:

60 Days In.

**The buzzword I don't want to hear in 2017 is:** Authentic.

My New Year's resolution for 2017 is:

Stick to my instincts.

My favorite factual program/series (or feature documentary) of 2016 was:

O.J.: Made In America (pictured).

I never thought they'd make a program about:

A parody of documentaries....IFC's Documentary Now.

Jonathan Chinn
FOUNDER
LIGHTBOX

**ENTERTAINMENT** 

The program/series/doc people will be talking about in five years is:

Making A Murderer.

In 18 months, no one will be talking about:

Hillary Clinton.



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My favorite factual program/series (or feature documentary) of 2016 was:

Making a Murderer.



Four kids in the '80s fighting supernatural monsters from their bikes that would actually work so well!

The program/series/doc people will be talking about in five years is:

Lore.

**In 18 months, no one will be talking about:** Snoop Dogg and Martha Stewart.

The best factual content I've seen online this year was: Cooked.

The most positive development in the non-fiction content industry this past year was:

The appetite for true crime shows.

### The most troubling development in the non-fiction content industry this past year was:

The reduction of development money from the broadcasters.

#### The idea I wish I thought of was:

The Murder Detectives.

#### The idea I'm happiest to have had this year was:

Outlaw Tech on Science Channel.

#### If 2016 taught me one thing it was:

Crime still pays.

#### The buzzword I don't want to hear in 2017 is:

Organizing Principle.

#### My New Year's resolution for 2017 is:

Staying away from Organizing Principle.



John Kuyk

**CEO AND EXECUTIVE** 

**PRODUCER** 

CMI PRODUCTIONS II INC.

Eric Schotz FOUNDER/CEO LMNO, ANVIL 1893

My favorite factual program/series (or feature documentary) of 2016 was:

Showtime's The Circus.

I never thought they'd make a program about:

America's Top Puppets.

The program/series/doc people will be talking about in five years is:

Trump's return to The Apprentice.

**In 18 months, no one will be talking about:** Traditional TV.

### The most positive development in the non-fiction content industry this past year was:

The growth of organizations like the NPA, where competitive producers are working together to make the non-fiction TV business better for everyone.

### The most troubling development in the non-fiction content industry this past year was:

The growth of the presentation/development deal vs. proper pilots.

#### The idea I wish I thought of was:

John Oliver's "F\*\*\* 2016" season finale tribute.

#### The idea I'm happiest to have had this year was:

Transition To Power: The Presidency for History.

#### The buzzword I don't want to hear in 2017 is:

"Lean in" or "bucket."

#### My New Year's resolution for 2017 is:

As Bruce Lee said, "Long-term consistency trumps short-term intensity."  $\label{eq:consistency} % As a consistency of the property of the pro$ 









**Timothy Kuryak** 

**SVP PRODUCTION &** 

**DEVELOPMENT** 

UPTV

My favorite factual program/series (or feature documentary) of 2016 was:

Tickled.

I never thought they'd make a program

Finding Prince Charming.

The program/series/doc people will be talking about in five years is:

The one that they just streamed the previous night.

In 18 months, no one will be talking about:

Kid versions of adult shows.

The best factual content I've seen online this

year was:

Samsung's 'Anthem' short for the Rio Olympics.

The most positive development in the non-fiction content industry this past year was:

Programming that is both entertaining and positive can find a place on TV and with audiences.

#### The most troubling development in the non-fiction content industry this past year was:

Investigations into production companies and their practices.

#### The idea I wish I thought of was:

Hamilton – The Musical.

#### The idea I'm happiest to have had this year was:

Low-cost ways to provide compelling original content to expand a show's season and deliver new content to audiences to engage them throughout the year.

#### If 2016 taught me one thing it was:

Anyone can be president, unless of course you win three debates, the popular vote and are a woman.

The buzzword I don't want to hear in 2017 is:

Post-truth

My New Year's resolution for 2017 is:

Know your brand and deliver on it.

**Derren Lawford IOINT CREATIVE** DIRECTOR **WOODCUT MEDIA** 

My favorite factual program/series (or feature documentary) of 2016 was:

Weiner.

I never thought they'd make a program

Whether dogs can fly planes. Apparently they can.

The program/series/doc people will be talking about in five years is:

Black Mirror, although by then everyone will be under the impression that it was a documentary series.

In 18 months, no one will be talking about: Box set factual.

#### The best factual content I've seen online this year was:

The YouTube clip of "Iguana vs. Snakes" from Planet Earth II.

The most positive development in the non-fiction content industry this past year was:

Netflix spending more money.

#### The most troubling development in the non-fiction content industry this past year was:

Netflix spending more money.

#### The idea I wish I thought of was:

Exodus: Our Journey To Europe by Keo and Captive by Lightbox. Both are brave, ambitious and innovative factual series ideas.

#### The idea I'm happiest to have had this year was:

Alfie Allen's Story of Football. And I love that someone is paying me to do something that involves me talking and thinking about something that I do everyday anyway!

#### If 2016 taught me one thing it was:

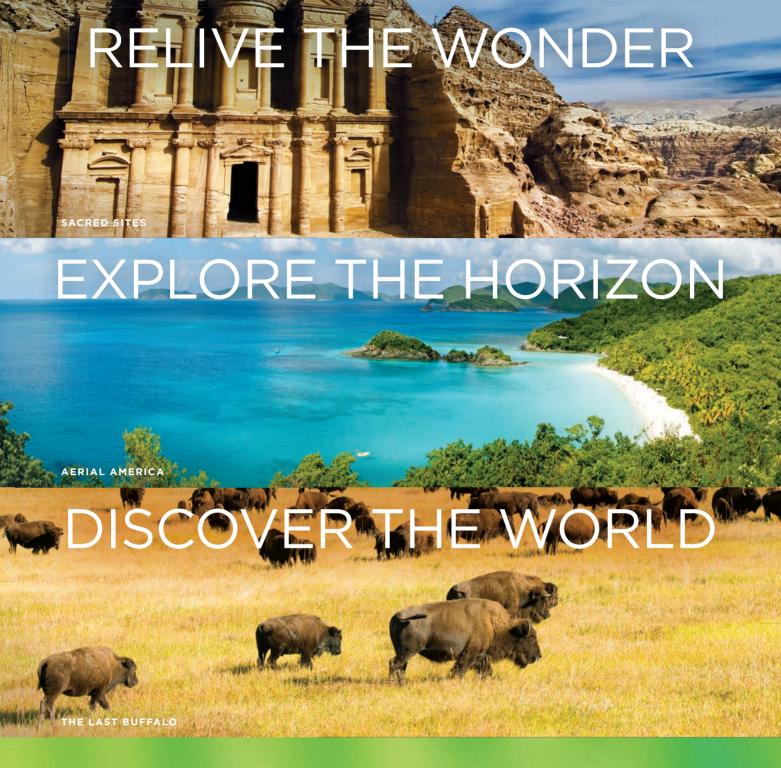
That we're only making TV. It's not like we're in danger of creating the next president of America.

#### The buzzword I don't want to hear in 2017 is:

Authenticity.

#### My New Year's resolution for 2017 is:

To be more authentic. •



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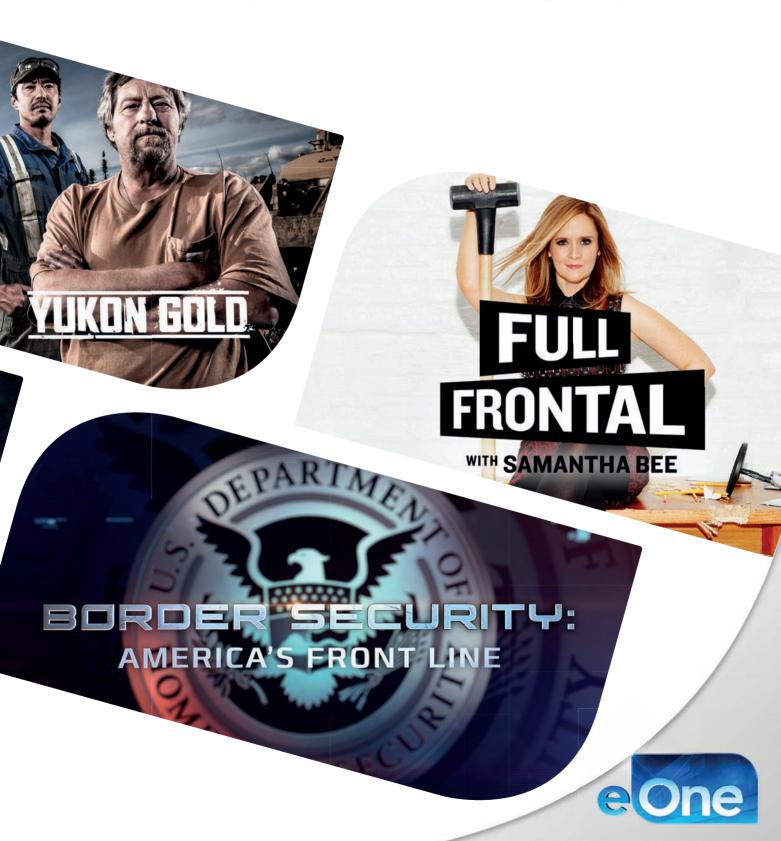


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The conversation around diversity in front of and behind the camera gained momentum in 2016, and unscripted programmers have been listening. Some of the top hits of recent years feature diverse casts, but there is still much work to be done.

the year 2060, the American population that identifies as being of two or more races will have tripled.

In around five years, the U.S. Census Bureau predicts more than half of the country's children will be part of a minority race or ethnic group. By

will be part of a minority race or ethnic group. By 2044 the United States will become a "majority minority nation," the federal agency reported earlier last year.

"We are going to have a lot of mixed-race children," says Vivi Zigler, president of digital, brand and audience development at Endemol Shine North America. "How do programmers and networks think now about diversity? That's very interesting and, although 2060 seems faraway, we're stepping incrementally closer to that reality."

It's anyone's guess what the television landscape will look like in 44 years, but in the meantime broadcasters, cable networks and streaming services are under pressure to better reflect their audiences in terms of gender, race, age, sexuality and disability.

At the Realscreen West conference in Santa Monica last June, Zigler presented research that the *Big Brother* and *MasterChef* prodoc had gathered. Outside of race and gender identification, for example, what remained true in 2016 was that boomers still matter. If a network wants to capture the biggest audience possible, a television series needs to be a hit with the 50-plus set and their viewing habits.

Still, says Zigler, "The first step has to be great storytelling before you get to anything else. If you start with, 'We need to fill a quota,' you learn quickly that doing it backwards doesn't work."

Although diversity is generally tracked in scripted, alternative programming tends to fare better than scripted in terms of reflecting an audience thanks to long-running competition series such as *The Amazing Race* and *America's Next Top Model*, but also docusoaps such as Oxygen's *Strut* and VH1's *Love & Hip-Hop* franchise.

In the UK, the BBC, Channel 4, ITV and Sky have teamed up to finance the Creative Diversity Network (CDN), an initiative that uses software to track diversity on camera and behind the scenes across British television. The first set of data, which is collected anonymously, is expected to be published this summer.

A world first, the initiative's goal is to make a business case for diversity.



"One of the problems with a lot of work around diversity is that people think it's something 'worthy,'" says Deborah Williams, CDN's executive director. "We're moving away from the idea that this is just about compliance. This is about creativity as well as it is about business and economics."

The program began collecting data in August after 10 years of conversations. The challenge for Williams was getting execs past the notion that the data would be used negatively.

"This is about how we reach the next audience and the next talent pools," she explains. "It's about people seeing that being employed by a broadcaster is an option. Most people don't think it is at the moment."

Given that diversity has become a major topic this past year, realscreen reached out to three U.S. cable nets to talk strategies around unscripted programs, as well as what we can expect in the year ahead.

#### A&E

One of 2016's break-out series was A&E and Bunim/Murray Productions' Born This Way, which follows a diverse group of young adults living with Down syndrome. The series debuted in December 2015 and was renewed for a third season in September after it won an Emmy for best unstructured reality series.

The series was initially developed to be similar to Bunim/Murray's landmark The Real World with the cast living in a single house. In the end, it was shot more like a doc, with crisscrossing storylines about the young adults and their parents, who must let go of their children in order for them to live independent lives.

"There is heart, but not an earnestness in the show. We depict them honestly and truthfully because they are as dynamic as any other character on TV," explains Elaine Frontain Bryant, A&E's executive VP head of programming. "It cut through because it was so relatable and it didn't feel like, 'Gee, I need to watch this to learn something.' You're learning things as you're being entertained."

opinions about what a healthy America is."

At A&E, diversity "doesn't mean gender or race; it really means points of view," adds Frontain Bryant. In the wake of Donald Trump's election as U.S. president, the network plans on rolling out programming in the year ahead that will enter into the conversations that swirled around the divisive election campaign.

"Our country feels like it's at a point in time of very diverse opinions about what a healthy America is," she says.

"You cannot dismiss what is going on right now," she adds. "How you explore that in ways that you're not getting from the news is the challenge. We're not trying to take a political point of view. It will be in a very documentary style showing people, groups and organizations that have points of view that you may never have been inside of before."

### VH<sub>1</sub>

Behind the scenes, diverse perspectives are a priority for Nina Diaz, head of unscripted at Viacom-owned nets VH1 and MTV. The former has been touting ratings successes, with first quarter ratings in 2016 up 29% over the year prior thanks to docuseries such as Love & Hip Hop, Mob Wives and Black Ink Crew.

The network also scored a sleeper hit late in the year with its "odd couple" cooking show, Martha & Snoop's Potluck Dinner Party, which has been renewed for a second season, and the premiere drawing three million total viewers according to Nielsen Live + 3 data. Meanwhile, the rebooted America's Next Top Model drew 1.3 million viewers to its December premiere.

Diaz was upped in VH1 programming not long after Chris McCarthy was promoted to network president. Both are now tasked with mounting a ratings resurgence at struggling sister net MTV.

"Our team is incredibly diverse," Diaz says. "We feel like that makes for better creativity, better programming and better ideas. That's the way I have always built my teams and continued that tradition as we came into VH1. On screen it's very important to us as well. Our television shows should look like and reflect what's going on culturally."

Top Model repeats rated well on VH1, but creators and exec producers Tyra Banks and Ken Mok's continued emphasis on diverse casting made it a fit with the channel's current strategy to reflect multiculturalism across time slots in order to attract the 18-34 demo.

"We even pushed to make it as diverse as it's ever been and more," explains Diaz. "On camera, we wanted a huge cross-section of archetypes and it is extremely multicultural. It is the most diverse cast in ANTM history."

On docusoaps, diverse new characters must feel like natural additions to the cast rather than token gestures. She touts the Love & Hip-Hop franchise (produced by Monami Entertainment and Eastern TV) as an example that has included transgender, lesbian, gay male and sexually fluid characters and storylines over the years.

"It's about the concept and will the concept speak to our core demo," Diaz says. "There are people on the docus who are in their 30s and 40s, but whatever they may be going through, or what format they may be in, has to be relatable or feel very 'of the now."



#### **TLC**

In 2015, it seemed like nets were rushing to greenlight reality shows starring transgender characters. One of the most prominent was TLC's I Am Jazz, a docuseries from This Is Just a Test about Florida teen Jazz Jennings and her family that is in production on season three. In 2016, it won a GLAAD Media Award for outstanding reality series, tied with E!'s I Am Cait.

At its heart, the show was about a preteen about to enter puberty. "We thought our core audience would be interested in lazz's story. That's what we look at with every show as we're trying to decide to pick it up," explains the Discovery-owned net's general manager, Nancy Daniels.

The development process involved sensitivity training with GLAAD to ensure producers, and later the network's marketing team, were using the right language and pronouns on set and with the press.

Daniels touts The Little Couple as an example of a series that made a group relatable to a wider audience, and 90 Day Fiance as the kind of format that is structured to allow for diverse casting.

"There's not a [diversity] policy in place," she explains. "We're proud of the different types of lives and worlds that we show, but there is still opportunity to improve. That's what we've been hearing across the board in entertainment in the last few years."

This summer, TLC branched out into scripted with producer Tyler Perry on the drama series Too Close To Home. Working with the prolific director, playwright, actor and author to see how he has built up a loyal following among African-Americans has been instructive, she maintains.

"Tyler has been amazingly successful because he is super-serving an audience that isn't being served," she says. "In the mainstream media, you don't hear a lot about his projects. You hear when they do millions at the box office, but his audience is paying attention to every single show he does. The guy is still doing plays and private performances. To me, it shows that there is an audience there that wasn't being served." •

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#### ARCHIVE REPORT

Raoul Peck (center) spent 10 years conceiving and making *I Am Not Your Negro*, a documentary essay covering the work of influential writer lames Baldwin.

**YESTERDAY** 

BY KEVIN RITCHIE

Peck's archive-heavy doc on the life and work of James Baldwin, is resonating with audiences, critics and the awards circuit.

hen Raoul Peck decided to make a film about late writer and intellectual James Baldwin, his lawyer advised him to drop the idea. Baldwin's estate had a reputation for refusing directors' requests to license his work for the big screen.

The Haitian-born, Paris-based filmmaker nonetheless persisted and wrote a letter. To his surprise, a response came within days. He flew to Washington, D.C. and met with Baldwin's sister, Gloria, who turned out to be a fan of his 2000 film *Lumumba*.

"They let us have a very, very cheap option which they didn't even renew after two years," Peck recalls. "They said forget about that – just concentrate on making this film. Not to have any money pressure on my shoulder was a very improbable and rare situation to be in as a filmmaker."

However, with that freedom came a great sense of responsibility. Peck would spend the next 10 years conceiving and making the documentary *I Am Not Your Negro*, a visual essay that covers a large swath of Baldwin's work but is structured around *Remember This House*, an unfinished book about the lives of civil rights leaders Medgar Evers, Malcolm X and Martin Luther King, Jr.

Rather than recount Baldwin's life, the film brings the influential writer's ideas to the fore by pairing archival imagery from the civil rights era of the 1960s and 1970s with voiceover by actor Samuel L. Jackson, who reads Baldwin's words in character.

The doc had its world premiere at the Toronto International Film Festival (TIFF) in September, where it won the People's Choice Documentary Award and landed a North American theatrical deal with Magnolia Pictures, which will begin a 20-to-25 city theatrical roll-out on Feb. 3. (It also received an Oscar-qualifying run in New York and

Los Angeles in December and has been sold to more than 15 territories globally, including Australia and Brazil.)

Following a year that saw several high-profile police shootings of black Americans, Black Lives Matter protests, debates about diversity in the film industry and a divisive U.S. presidential election campaign, *I* Am Not Your Negro is a

potent reminder of the enduring power and prescience of Baldwin's social critiques.

For the doc community, *I Am Not Your Negro* is an example of how creative producing can succeed if a filmmaker is given enough time to realize an idea. The film would not

have been possible if the Baldwin estate and primary backers ITVS and ARTE had badgered Peck with deadlines.

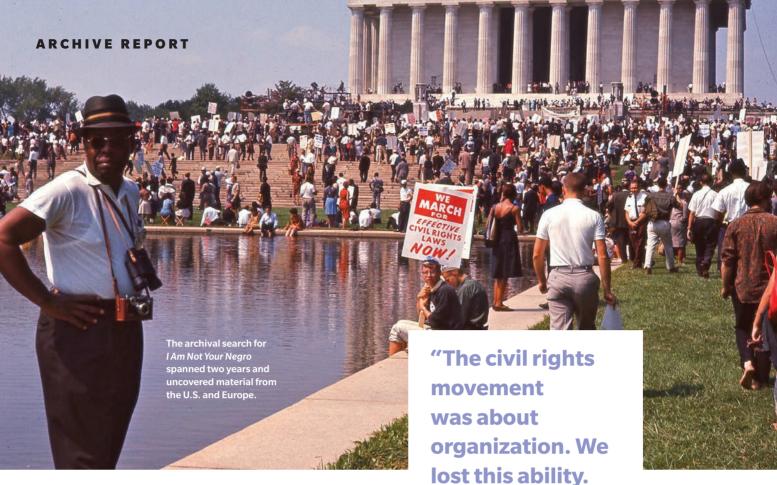
Once he decided the film would be a doc based on Baldwin's writing, Peck tasked Rémi Grellety of Paris-based Velvet Film with spearheading archival research, which would become essential to the doc's financing process. The director had already amassed footage, stills and audio, but hired French researcher Marie-Hélène Barbéris

"It's a discussion piece with the words of Baldwin and the authority of Baldwin. It's a film you can see several times." to begin what would become a two-year archival search across the U.S. and Europe. After six months of research, editing started. There was no script, so Peck and his producers started creating sequences and a 30-minute teaser they took to potential funders so they could see the various approaches

employed: the use of Hollywood movies, Baldwin interviews, voice-over, and imagery from the civil rights movement.

"The story is there, but how do I assemble it?" asks Peck. "I was thinking about images, about the stuff I knew I was going





to research and things I knew 10, 20, 30 years before – my whole youth. The through line was my own experience with Baldwin: How I learned about Baldwin, the impact of Baldwin in my life, my way of seeing images, analyzing images and my ambivalent love of Hollywood movies. A lot of this I got from Baldwin."

Some potential backers still had trouble envisioning the final result, while others came on board gradually as Peck completed more sequences over the three years leading up to the TIFF premiere. (The budget was US\$1.25 million.)

"The process was a very unique way to finance the film," he says. "It's a rare privilege to do a film like this. There is nothing I would change in that film. We went all the way and we didn't leave anything unchecked."

Archival sources included Getty Images, NBCUniversal Archives, Thomson Reuters, the Mississippi Department of Archives and History, Gaumont Pathé in France, and photographers such as Spider Martin, Bob Adelman and Don Sturkey.

Researcher Prudence Arndt also joined the team to undertake the hunt for rare Baldwin photos in smaller archives in the United States.

Baldwin was a well-known media personality from the Sixties to the Eighties, so finding footage of lectures, TV appearances and debates was not difficult. More

personal or less-well-known footage and images proved more challenging to acquire, as his personal estate is small, and does not have the capacity to archive visual material.

We lost our

leaders in the last

30 to 40 years."

Peck augments the footage of Baldwin with Hollywood films – used under fair use rules – as well as originally shot footage of anti-police brutality protests in Ferguson, Missouri and public domain footage from the civil rights era that was restored and colorized in some cases.

"The idea was to present those images that are well-known in a new angle or focus more on a specific detail or the point of view," says Grellety.

Although *I Am Not Your Negro* will open theatrically in the middle of an uncertain political climate, Peck hopes the doc will help reframe political discussions around race and the economy as conversations about power.

"We want to energize the discussion because it's not a film about yesterday – it's a film about today," Peck told realscreen during an interview in Toronto last September. "It's a discussion

piece with the words of Baldwin and the authority of Baldwin. It's a film you can see several times. Every bit is profoundly truthful and gives you a line to follow.

"Another aspect of the film is that it shows how all the [civil rights] fights until today were organized. It was not just spontaneous. It was sit down, think and create [an] organization that can take this fight on with allies. The civil rights movement was about organization. And we lost this ability. We lost our leaders in the last 30 to 40 years.

"Most of them were killed, bought, went into exile or went to prison. That was decimation of a whole leadership," he continues.

"We are still very separated. Baldwin gives you the keys to that; he gives you the analysis and he points his finger to the enemy and the citadel. The citadel is not the little fight about segregation or about race. It's bigger than that."



#### **ARCHIVE REPORT**

Ken Burns is putting the finishing touches on his latest film, *The Vietnam War*, blending the best of historical material with modern editing techniques to create a truly immersive experience.

BY SONYA FATAH

circa 1830s New England home tucked into the rural American Northeast, where the Mad Brook babbles into the Connecticut River, is at the heart of Ken Burns' search for responses to the longtime question on American identity: Who are we?

Over a 38-year period, every project on the documentarian's slate has attempted to provide a multipolar lens in answer to that driving question. To that end, Burns and his robust team of researchers and editors have examined endless reels and collections of archival material, searching for nuance with the intensity of miners patiently panning inch by inch of alluvial soil in search of flecks of gold.

The magic, so to speak, happens in the above-mentioned editing chambers in Walpole, New Hampshire, where Burns has worked on almost all of his films with a ceaseless devotion to detail. There, the filmmaker has created "an alchemy that resists articulation", developing a process of collecting, documenting, visiting and revisiting each archive in the hope that, with each new view, novel perspectives will mushroom.

Burns and his partners at Florentine Films are now in the year-long final phase of putting to bed their latest series – *The Vietnam War*, a project that provides a slightly different challenge when compared with his other war series: the seminal *Civil War* and *The War*, which covers the second World War. With the events of Vietnam still fresh in many American memories and with many



Ken Burns' The Vietnam War is an 18-hour examination of the conflict derived through 100 interviews, set to air in September of 2017.

veterans around to tell their tales, the new series provides a unique avenue for engagement.

"How is it that you can tell [the story] in a way that permits a multitude of voices and perspectives to feel like they are being heard and honored?" asks Burns in a telephone interview with realscreen. "That, I think, is the great challenge of our Vietnam film."

In it, Burns and Lynn Novick piece together a narrative that extends over 10 episodes and 18 hours, developing a revisionist perspective on the war through myriad perspectives gleaned through 100 interviews, including – but not limited to – pro- and anti-war supporters on the U.S. side, the U.S. administration, and civilian and military voices from Vietnam.

The overall scope of Vietnam aside, the film will feature a unique archival voice for a Burns' history series, which is being produced out of the company's New York offices by Sarah Botstein, Novick and Burns. It will be edited in the Walpole studio, and contains a veritable vault of archival materials: including photographs from some of the most acclaimed journalists of that time, and unseen home videos and recordings from within the Kennedy, Johnson and Nixon administrations.

An unusual dimension of the archive is the wealth of footage from the broadcast networks, a departure from previous Florentine Films' series where the documentation of war was sourced from the the National Archives. Vietnam marked the first time that broadcast networks brought the

story of war into American living rooms.

"I treat the footage as if it is coverage. I feel obligated to not just illustrate, but [also] to find some artful way of combining the various footages to do something more," Burns says.

We will have to wait until September 2017 when The Vietnam War debuts on PBS to know how Burns and Novick achieve the effect in this ambitious series. But Burns offers some insight: In the final episode of the series, the focus is largely on the Tet Offensive (which began on Jan. 30, 1968) and its aftermath. In the Walpole editing studio, a long-time editor and Florentine Films collaborator. Erik Ewers, is one of the master cutters of the Tet Offensive sequence. Burns points to the episode as an example of his effort to provide a truly immersive experience of the Vietnam War, which he describes as an "artful blend" of everything -"of quick cutting and also very slow cutting, and also realistic sound effects and the music, the commentary of the people who were in the middle of it, frantic radio communication and TV reports both on and off camera."

In the scores of screenings that are part of the decade-long editing process behind *The Vietnam War*, Burns brings in people with different lenses to view the film. By providing a wide ranging presentation of the offensive, which proved to be the turning point in the U.S. war, Burns seems satisfied with the use of the archive: "I haven't had one person respond that they didn't feel like they were in it."



The use of the archive is seminal in retelling history from diverse vantage points. Yet, the skill of deploying archive in new and astonishing ways is something Burns has quietly mastered over time, beginning in the late 1970s when he worked alone in a little cabin a couple of miles from the current downtown Walpole location. There, financially strapped but dedicated to the making of *Brooklyn Bridge* (released in 1981), he spent countless hours poring over image after image, searching for hidden truths.

"You want to make sure to use the stills and the footage in a way that you are looking for something more, a condition in which the words you're hearing or the sounds that you're hearing and the picture that you are seeing just don't add up to one and one equals two, but you're looking for some odd catalyst where one and one equals three," he says.

Therein lie what Burns calls "equivalencies, and that's a little bit different from illustration."

The effect is almost illusionary, and the filmmaker says the best compliment of his career came to him during an awards ceremony for that first film at the Brooklyn Museum. A woman in the audience wanted to know where Burns had acquired the footage of the girl on the Brooklyn Bridge. It isn't footage, Burns informed her. He patiently described what he had done with a still photograph, tilting the camera upwards on the image and layering on a soundtrack – the sound of seagulls passing overhead, the men shouting to one another, the creaking of a crane in motion – to make the photograph come alive. But the woman in the audience was disbelieving. She argued that it could not have been a photograph.

"That's when you know you've done it," he says. Over the past 38 years, Burns says he has grown as a filmmaker but his process of playing with and presenting archival materials in a new format to his audience hasn't changed much. Given that Florentine Film projects often

come to life over years, not months, the most obvious ingredient in his recipe is time.

"If you are willing to

spend as many years as we do in crafting [a project], then you have the possibility that the body of water you are working in is not shallow but deep."

Achieving depth comes through the collaboration of a mixed team of seasoned Burns-trained editors and fresh blood. For months the team listens to a recording of Burns' voice telling the story sans images. The editors listen to the story almost as an audio recording, seeing no faces, no images, and no footage until they arrive at the arc of the story. Little by little the images and footage are inserted

along with a soundtrack (the editing is informed by the beat and rhythm of the music as much as the words in its narration).

"Dozens and dozens" of screenings follow before an episode is finally a final cut.

The change in Burns' approach from Brooklyn Bridge to, say, The Vietnam War is less to do with the craft of storytelling and more with the changes in technology.

In the old days Burns would spend hours in each archive hand photographing images using two umbrella lamps and moving in and out to create that legendary "Ken Burns effect." Most of that work now takes place using a computer program to create movement and effects.

Technology, he insists, changes very little in the fundamental business of storytelling. In the 1850s lots of people said that the telegraph would change everything, he says. There was fear that the process would change how we communicate. "But look, you still put your pants on one leg at a time."

The Walpole studio was once owned by a doctor. In the doctor's chambers today there is a kind of medical precision to the Burns process; like a good surgeon the craft is mastered over hours and days and years, and through the act of repetition. How long should this shot last? What should he cut to? What color should its background be? Through trial and error, that same shot is done and redone until the result is achieved.

The equivalencies Burns seeks in his treatment of archive can be traced to his tutelage under still photographers. In fact, Burns owes the use of the borrowed phrase to one of his mentors, modernist photographer Paul Strand, famous for his 1915 documentary photo of Wall Street but also for his silent film

Manhattan, which depicted everyday life in New York.
Strand used the term "equivalencies" to describe what he looked for in an image.
Burns believes he has "bolderized" the term through his treatment of the archive.

"By energetically moving across its landscape," the filmmaker treats live footage as if it were a painting.

"In archive we're trying

to suspend the laws of belief and treat it as if it were coming alive," he says.

Through the filmmaker's relationship with PBS, the final result reaches hundreds of thousands, many of them in schools training to be the future leaders of their communities.

"I've been in the business of telling shared stories," he summarizes. "The solution is not to divide to our tribal instincts but to find in these shared stories connections for people.

"Some of the recent divisions were born in Vietnam so if our film can help unpack some of that stuff that would be a good thing."

"I feel obligated to not just illustrate, but to find some artful way of combining the various footages to do something more."

# LET'S MAKE **HISTOR**

BY MATT WHITE

The best archival researchers are obsessed with the detective work that leads to great discoveries and takes them into underground vaults and chambers in global outposts. ACSIL's Matt White argues it is time to formally recognize these people for their contribution to film.

ichael Kantor, the executive director for 'American Masters' at WNET, had a message and a shout-out for the archival producers attending a 2015 conference for ACSIL, the organization of footage licensors. Once a producer and now a commissioner of archive-rich programming, Kantor understood that the excavation of rare and surprising footage is essential to successful historical programming. Channeling Archimedes, he coined a new term for the research contribution to an historical film: the "Eureka" moment, in reference to that time when

a piece of footage surfaces that literally alters the narrative of the program. "Usually these happen when your archival researcher

comes running into your office...and says, 'Wow ...I found something amazing," he said.

So, who finds this material that challenges the film's narrative and lures audiences to the theater or TV to experience "never-before-seen, rare footage"? More often than not, the footage had been found by "archival producers" – a profession over a century old that mixes the skills and labors of archeologists, librarians, private detectives, historians, chemists, translators, psychologists, forensic scientists, intellectual-property attorneys, and filmmakers. These professionals deserve recognition that belies their status in the creation of archival documentaries. There should be a trophy from every award-giving body that celebrates media excellence. Archival producers deserve Oscars and Emmys and Critics Choice Awards and wherever we recognize the accomplishments of an editor or sound designer, we should add a category for the archive researcher, too.

When we plotted out the research for The Beatles: Eight Days a Week - The Touring Years, we put the entire media research process upfront. Instead of searching for items in a script, we set our sights on everything we could find about the Beatles between 1963 and 1967. This was a massive hunt involving 30 professionals, spanning four continents and utilizing social media to crowdsource amateur media in people's basements. Ron Howard was brought in to direct the project after we had completed our exploration. We organized the archival media; Ron Howard found the story.

Archival producers are made, not born. There are no schools for archival producers, no unions, no guilds. The elite of the archive research community has been at this work for decades: some for 30 or 40 years. They learned the craft through ad hoc apprentice systems, supporting the previous generation of film researchers who filled massive historical series with footage (e.g., The World at War, Smithsonian World,

Eyes on the Prize). They have built strong, productive and often personal relationships with decision-makers at the most valued archives and they understand the landscape of the footage underground or wilderness. They are pathfinders who move smartly through one archive of dying media to another.

More importantly, they think about footage all the time. They dream footage. The best of archival researchers are obsessed with the detective work that leads to great discoveries and takes them into underground vaults and chambers in global outposts. While an amateur researcher will probably look to YouTube for source footage (and then they can't really figure out how to license the footage or get a high-quality master), the archival producer goes to the source: to analog films and video masters and field tapes, the original media elements that never appear on YouTube and that are still waiting to be digitized. This is where the discoveries of "rare and unseen footage" happen. The archival producers who dig it out are the professionals who deliver on the marketing promise of rare and unseen footage. It takes them decades to reach the top of their craft.

Now that we are undergoing a renaissance in prestige historical programming (look at what has been driving the doc awards for past few years: O.I.: Made in America; Amy; What Happened, Miss Simone; 13th; Black Panthers: Vanguard of the Revolution, and many more) it is time for the archive producers to come on stage and take their bows. It is hard to think of any successful historical doc that doesn't have a gifted and resourceful archival producer in its credits.

So let's do it. As the archives become more and more important to historical films with wide and hungry audiences, we need to put the archival producer on some kind of pedestal: a place where they can be observed and admired and envied. We want millennials to dream of being archival producers when they grow up; otherwise, the deep knowledge honed over decades by those at the top of their game today will not pass on, and our deep reservoir of non-digitized film and video programming will decay, mold, and disappear. Let's make history.

Matthew White is an award-winning filmmaker and managing partner of Sutton Hoo Studios, an archive-inspired production company based in the Washington DC area. He developed with his partners the original idea and served as co-producer for The Beatles: Eight Days a Week - The Touring Years and acts as the executive director for footage licensing association ACSIL. @mattwhite50. •

# Our fave four

In a year that spoiled audiences with sterling documentaries and can't-miss docuseries, from thought-provoking biographies to the politically and socially inspiring, the staff at *realscreen* takes a look back at the best non-fiction from 2016.



# KEVIN RITCHIE Kate Plays Christine

One of the year's strangest and most intense documentaries revisits the story of Christine Chubbuck, a Sarasota, Florida news reporter who shot herself to death on live television in 1974. Rather than a standard biopic, director Robert Greene follows an actor (Kate Lyn Sheil) cast in a mock low-budget melodrama based on the Chubbuck story as a way to unpack his own impulse to make a film on such a grisly topic. As the movie, which was beautifully filmed by DP Sean Price Williams, builds to its inevitable climactic scene, you think about all the weird s\*\*\* directors put actors through and then you think about all the weird s\*\*\* you've ever (voluntarily) sat through and suddenly the cinema screen seems like the thinnest of barriers. It's so meta you notice a new layer every time you watch.

## DANIELE ALCINII Weiner

Josh Kriegman and Elyse Steinberg's Academy Awardshortlisted Weiner, which held its world premiere at Sundance at the start of last year, hits on every note of embarrassment. despair and irritation while still managing to remain completely engrossing. The cinéma vérité film captures, in agonizing detail, the attempts of former U.S. congressman Anthony Weiner to reinvigorate his scandalplagued political career through a promising 2013 New York City mayoral run, only to be followed by a devastating downfall at the hands of yet another sexting scandal. Over the 100-minute doc, wonderfully edited by Eli B. Despres, the filmmakers manage to piece together a painful and scintillating look into the life of a man who, despite his talents, continually chooses the path of self-destruction.

### TIFFANY RUSHTON

#### Little Big Shots

As a fan of classic television, I am a sucker for watching talented kids and aspiring to be them when I finally grow up. Better still is waiting for the always fantastic reaction on Steve Harvey's face, as he's blown away by the abilities of the children featured – from Bruce Lee aficionados to the next great singers and musicians of the world. In a world full of twists and turns, Little Big Shots provides a moment in time to marvel at the inspiring talents of the next generation, and I look forward to tuning in to season two!

## DARAH HANSEN Planet Earth II

I'm proud to say that my mother and father have dedicated much of their lives and expertise to documenting and caring for wildlife - feathered, furry and flora - in our native Canada. So it's only natural that I would be attracted to the BBC's docuseries Planet Earth II. The animals and scenery, shot in UHD, are stunning. But the true power of this natural history juggernaut lies in its ability to inspire whole new generations of people, millions of whom (based on early ratings) are eager to follow in the footsteps of Sir David Attenborough and champion our planet and all its living creatures. What an accomplishment. •



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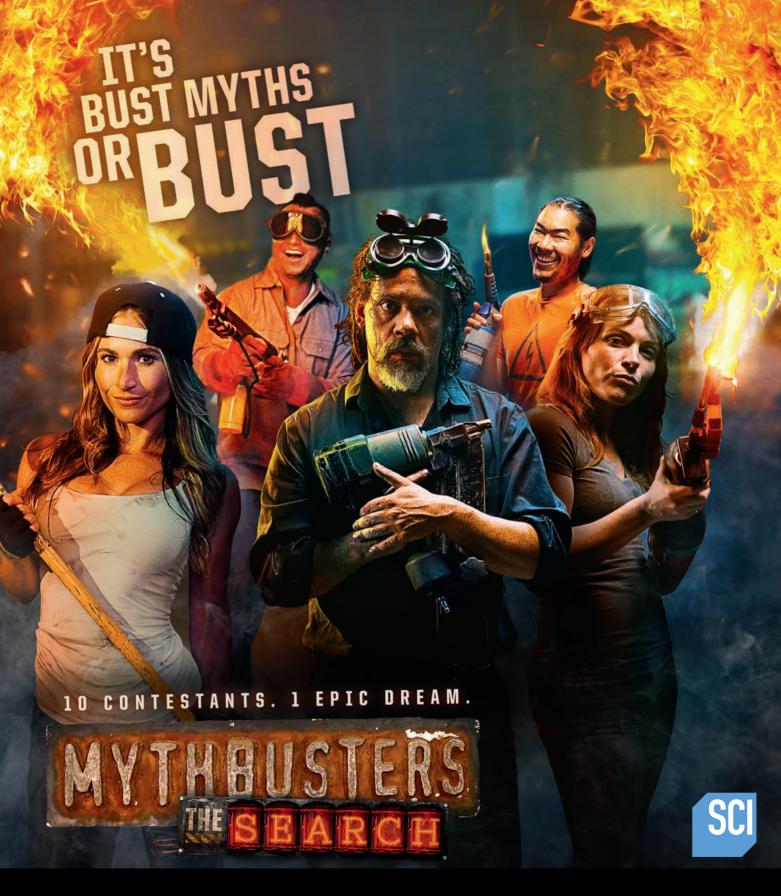
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